

Battle Lines

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Summary: The USS Righteous and USS Intrepid find themselves facing some not-so-unfamiliar foes...

Battle Lines

Prologue

>
 Dr. Andrew Hawke, head of the USS Galileo's science staff, gazed
>through the large window of his quarters and relaxed. He had finished
twelve straight hours in Stellar Cartography charting protostars and using
>gravimetric readouts to predict the course of the movement of the
Sagittarius Arm of the Milky Way through the next million-odd years. He
>looked out at the stars he had dedicated his life to studying, the stars he
had been puzzling over for over twenty years, trying to learn everything he
>could about them. Dr. Hawke spotted some familiar stars, stars he helped
discover and stars that made his career. He saw the same little points of
>light that people had puzzled over for millions of years and were only
recently beginning to really understand their workings.
>
 His lights dimmed and the window went dark. At first Hawke thought
>it was part of the computer's timer cycle, but it was only 1930 hours.
Then he heard it. As the shadow crossed his window and darkened his room,
>a low whining and rumbling emanated from it. It had to be a spacecraft.
He couldn't quite make it out, but the shape looked familiar...Suddenly, there
>was a bright flash of green light-

>Discontinuity.
> At Starbase 235, Admiral Jeffrey Brand had just called a meeting
with the two visiting starship captains, Captain Murphy of the USS
>Righteous, an Excelsior-class ship with a proud history, and

Captain
Andropov of the USS Intrepid, one of the newest "Batch II" Galaxy-class starships.

> The captains took their places and the admiral spoke. "We have
lost a starship, the USS Galileo, on a science mission near the Beta Stromgren system. She was completely destroyed by an as yet unidentified
black vessel. There are a few things we do know about this threat.

> We know what it isn't. It's not ours, it's not Romulan or Klingon, and
it's definitely not Borg. In fact, we've never seen anything like it before. Galileo's log tapes do show us one thing, however, that the ship
seems organic-looking and teardrop-shaped, and there could be more than one of them."

> Andropov was in disbelief. "You mean it's a living ship?"

> Before the admiral could answer, a familiar voice that they had
never expected to hear again came on over the loudspeakers. "This is Tam Elbrun aboard the Gomtuu. I believe we have an explanation for this
situation. It was foretold in the ancient texts of Gomtuu's civilization. Several of his kind separated themselves from society long ago and
departed. It was prophesied that they would return to pass judgment upon the rest of their civilization. They have returned. It is these exiled
enemies that we must face."

>

> I

> The Battle

> "Sir, the alien ship is firing!" The weapons officer on the Intrepid and everyone else on the bridge could only watch as the green bolt
of energy consumed and destroyed the Gomtuu.

> "Where are my quantum torpedoes? Get closer and open up with full weapons," ordered Captain Murphy aboard the Righteous.

> "We have the enemy in range now, sir," came the call of the weapons officer.

> "Fire!," shouted Captain Andropov. As the Intrepid moved into position, a large robotic arm lowered a high-yield quantum torpedo into the
mouth of the launch tube. But something in the many wires and tubes on the arm slipped, causing a joint to twitch out of position. The torpedo was
live as it fell from the arm's grasp onto the deck, where it exploded with such force that all two hundred other torpedoes in the bay also detonated
in a furious explosion. The ship lurched and shook wildly. On the bridge, officers and crewmen were trying frantically to process the damage and
casualty reports flooding the intercom system from all over the ship. On board the Righteous nearby, tactical officers were in a similar state of
panic.

> "Sir, we have detected a massive explosion from Intrepid! She's losing power and drifting."

> "On screen...My God!" Righteous's commanding officer could

not
believe his eyes. Nearly half the ship was missing. Where her forward
stardrive hull should be, there was now a gaping, charred, and twisted
hole. As they were attempting to fathom the situation, the ship rocked
with another explosion.
> "Sir, we've been hit hard. Our shields are down to ten percent and
they've taken out our tractor beam."
> "Report!" came the cry from the command chair as Captain Andropov
desperately tried to remain in control of Intrepid.
> "Sir, we've lost contact with decks 18 through 35 and 37 through
42, we have no shields, and our weapons are gone! However, Engineering
reports main power under control and warp drive is still online."
> "We need to get out of here before anything else happens. We're
like sitting ducks out here. Set course for the nearest starbase, maximum
possible warp." Down in Engineering, on deck 36, the warp core, the heart
of the Intrepid, began to beat faster as her engines filled with plasma for
the jump to lightspeed. But something went seriously wrong. Several
weakened ducts tore open, releasing deadly plasma coolant into the room.
> Many of the engineering crewmen barely had time to comprehend what was
happening as the gas liquefied them in a matter of seconds.

> "Coolant leak! Everybody out of the area! Containment doors are
closing! Move, move," came the frantic shouts of the chief engineer,
Commander Simpson, trying to get everybody out of there as quick as possible
before the huge containment doors closed, sealing off the warp core
completely.
> "What now," the captain asked as Intrepid was rocked by another
explosion.
> "We've just lost deck 36, sir, and the chief engineer reports a
coolant leak, possible breach of the warp core!"
> "We must eject the core!" shouted one of the security personnel on
the bridge.
> "Yes, eject! Now!" The captain confirmed the request. "Wait! I have an idea..." Andropov leaned over to speak to the security officer.
> "Aye, sir," came the confused acknowledgement. Outside, the

> Intrepid banked and her underside slowly faced the enemy vessel. A hull
plate burst off and a huge silver cylinder shot out of the opening,
engulfed in and followed by clouds of high-energy plasma and coolant gases.
Everything seemed as if in slow motion as the ejected matter/antimatter
reactor came closer to its target. Finally, the core impacted on the hull
of the alien spacecraft and exploded in a flash of light and energy,
engulfing the ship in a huge explosion, vaporizing it, and blowing Intrepid
and Righteous back in a powerful shock wave.
> With the battle over, Righteous's crew began to help the

crippled

>Intrepid. "So what can we do to help them?"

> "Just tow her to the nearest starbase,sir. I think it's Starbase 235-"

> "Lieutenant, we have no tractor beam."

> On Intrepid, the situation was no different. "Transmit distress
signal on all channels," came the order from Captain Andropov, followed by

>a barked "Damage report!"

> "We have casualty reports from all decks below 10, sir, and hull
breaches on decks 19 through 42. Emergency forcefields and bulkheads are

>in place, and we have limited power from the fusion reactors. We're fine
for now, sir, but we may be having some trouble later."

>
 Just then, the main viewscreen filled with the huge, sinister black

>form of another enemy ship. Frantically, Andropov ordered, "Get us out of
here! NOW! Impulse, thrusters, anything!"

>
 "Nothing. We're just sitting ducks here."

>
 On board the Righteous, Captain Murphy shouted orders. "Fire

>a spread of torpedoes!" Outside, four high-yield quantum torpedoes blazed
blue-white as they streaked in a perfect line towards the black ship.

>When they hit, the vessel rocked and exploded into several large chunks which
drifted slowly away spewing gas and debris.

>
 The lights on the Intrepid dimmed for no more than a second.

"What

>was that," asked Captain Andropov.

> "Minor fluctuations in the power grid, sir. We're having some
trouble rerouting power through the main fusion reactors."

>
 "Well, then, it seems, Lieutenant, that you have a new job to do."

>
 "Right away, sir," said the security officer as he dashed into the

>turbolift.

> The lights dimmed again.

>

> II
 Power

>

> "Ops, divert all auxiliary power to life support and see if
Captain Murphy on the Righteous has any help to offer. Get moving, we're

>running out of time!"

> On the bridge of the Righteous, the command crew was already at
work. "Sir, don't we have some emergency mooring and starbase support

>lines? We could hook up with the Intrepid, run our warp core at a higher
pace, and keep both ships up and running. Our reactor never runs above 60%

>capacity anyway. There's plenty of spare energy."

> "Good plan, Commander. Start work on it immediately. Do whatever
you need to do to get the system up and running." Captain Murphy sat down

>and thought about the situation. He had to find a way to get them to a
starbase or any place but here. Just then his train of thought was

>interrupted by an intrusive beeping from his desktop viewer.The screen told
him there was an incoming message from Admiral Brand,

the commander of
>forces in the sector. He went straight to the point.

> "Captain Murphy, we have received a distress call from you
about
the Intrepid. Here are your orders. You are to evacuate as
many personnel
>from Intrepid and report to Starbase 235 for repairs. A salvage team
will
be sent out later to pick up what is left afterwards."
>
 "Sir, I have an alternative I think is worth considering.
Right
>now we have extended umbilicals to Intrepid to keep her supplied
with
power. We are making repairs to her vital systems so that she
can make it
>back to base."

> "Good. Continue with your work and I'll try to get some ships
out
to help you."
>
 "Thank you,sir." Captain Murphy pressed a button on his
viewer,
>ending the transmission.

> Righteous's chief engineer entered Murphy's ready room. "Sir,
the
mooring cables and tethers are in place. Intrepid is hooked up
to us and
>power to both ships has been restored."

> "Good work, Commander. Now let's work on a method of getting us
to
starbase 235. We can reach it in four days at full impulse."

>
 "Yes sir. I'll put my teams on the job right away."
>

>
 III
> The Journey

>
 Down in Main Engineering, Righteous's chief engineer began to

>implement his plan. "Okay, everybody, this is what we have to do. We
need
to divert all power being used to keep Intrepid alive to her
impulse
>engines, combining with her available fusion reactors. We also need
to
modify our impulse drive to run only on power from our fusion
reactors.
>Commander Simpson, this is Commander McCombs aboard the Righteous.
We're
ready to make the modifications now."
>
 "Good. Proceed as planned," came the answer from Simpson over
the
>comm system.

> Up on the bridge, Murphy was also preparing to get underway.
"Lt.
Commander Thomas, I need you to match speed with Intrepid
throughout the
>entire journey. Otherwise, the umbilicals will snap and we will
fail.
Let's get moving."
>
 A cheer erupted from the crew of the Intrepid as they started
to
>move towards the starbase, now only a three days away. In a short
time,
they would be safely docked.
>
 Just outside Starbase 235's sensor range a few hours later,

>Intrepid slowed slightly, straining the umbilicals. The power line
between
the ships snapped and Intrepid's power systems completely
died, giving them
>about ten minutes of oxygen left, now that the scrubbers were off.
Murphy
immediately stopped his ship and, knowing the situation,
dispatched orders
>quickly. "Lieutenant, take one of your men to the airlock. I'll join

you
>two there in a few minutes. Chief, I want your transporter operators
>standing by to beam over Intrepid's crew if anything goes wrong."
With
>that, Murphy headed down to the airlock closest to the snapped umbilical.
>
 "Lieutenant Miller, I called you and Mr. Kyle down here because we
>need to repair that umbilical. We only have six minutes left." The three
>men, after putting on their spacesuits, headed outside the ship to repair
>the power cable. They immediately pulled out their tools and began to fuse
>the ends together. "Be sure not to get too close to Righteous's end of the
>cable," Murphy reminded.

> Suddenly Kyle spoke up. "Sir, I'm reading a rise in power through
>the cable!"
>
 "Stay away," Murphy warned.
>
 "I can't! I'm drifting towards the cable! Help, it's a power

>surge! I..." There was a flash of light as the giant spark vaporized Kyle.
As the surge of current passed through Kyle's body, the lights in the
>Intrepid went on for an instant, then went dark again as Kyle
>disintegrated. "Sir, we have less than two minutes to complete these
>repairs," Miller warned.

> "Do it and get out of here before we both end up like Kyle!"
The
>two worked faster. Power to Intrepid was restored just in time.
>
 "How many did we lose?"
>
 "Just one. Ensign Kyle."
>
 "Let's go. Keep an eye on that console, Lieutenant."
>
 "Aye, sir."
>

>
 IV
> Planetfall

>
 "Sir, we are approaching the Marnis system," said the conn

>officer after several uneventful hours.

> "Isn't there a medical research facility on Marnis III," asked Murphy.

> "Correct, sir. Maybe we can offload some of the casualties and get
>some preliminary repairs done."
>
 "Good idea, Lieutenant. Assume standard orbit around Marnis III

>and transmit a signal explaining the situation." The Righteous and
>Intrepid entered orbit on the far side of the planet, away from the medical
>base. As they approached, however, things became unusual...

> "Sir, I am detecting an abnormality on the planet's surface, near
>the location of the base. A large crater and huge magnetometer readings
>indicating a large metallic mass. The base is gone, almost as if it's
>been...scooped off the face of the planet!"
>
 "Oh no. It can't be the..."
>
 The science officer on duty finished the sentence for him. "The Borg."
>
 Murphy's comm badge beeped. "Sir, incoming message from the Intrepid."
>
 "What is it, Captain?"

>
 "Jeff, are we seeing what I think we're seeing?"
>
 "Yes, Nikolai. I think, however, we should assemble heavily armed
>away teams to see if there is anything left and if it's safe to go
down
there."
>
 "Agreed. Andropov out."
>
 Murphy assembled his team quickly. "Simpson, Thomas, and
Mendez,
>you're with me."

> When they got down to the planet, they retuned their phaser
rifles
to different frequencies to counter the Borg adaptation
abilities. They
>proceeded towards the readings of a large metallic object.

> They had only gone a hundred meters or so when they heard
that
distinct metallic breathing and knew that there were still
Borg drones
>around. Their tricorders went crazy with readings of metallic
objects in
this barren wasteland. It was then that they knew why
this crater was
>unlike any other mark that the Borg leave on a planet. They looked
up to
see a stupendous sight. It was a Borg mother ship, in the
shape of
>a dodecahedron and looming stupendously several thousand feet over
them,
even though almost three-quarters of it was buried in a
crater in the
>ground. They must have come too close, because suddenly they were

surrounded by Borg, bionic appendages raised. Mendez shot one of
them
>and was instantly cut down by a volley of green energy blasts from
the
other Borg, who now closed in on Murphy, Thomas, and Simpson
with their
>assimilation drills and probes spinning. The three instinctively
fought
in self-defense, shooting five and killing the rest in
hand-to hand combat.
>The three officers accomplished this by using their knowledge of
Borg
operation. They simply outmaneuvered the Borg punches and
pulled the life
>support cables protruding from their necks.

> When the fight was over, Murphy slapped his comm
badge.
"Righteous, get us out of here, now! Move away from the
planet and send an
>urgent report about what we found here to Starfleet Command. Ask
them what
we should do about this."
>
 "Aye sir," came the reply from the Righteous's bridge.
>
 After the two starships had retreated safely to Marnis V, a
point
>out of range of the Borg yet still able to monitor them, Murphy
received a
reply from Earth. The screen on his desktop viewer
read, "URGENT-PRIORITY
>1 MESSAGE FROM STARFLEET COMMAND."

> "What can I do for you, Admiral?"

> "Captain, your report on the crashed Borg ship was of
utmost
importance to us. We need some way to counter this threat
to the
>Federation."

> "Sir, from what we found on the surface, the research facility
was
completely obliterated. Maybe, if we concentrate fire from
many starships
>on that Borg ship or another unstable area of the planet's crust, we
can
destroy the ship."

>
 "Or...Is there anything else in the Marnis system of use to us?
If
>we destroy the Marnis star, we will be able to delete the entire
system."

>"My computer shows that Marnis III was uninhabited before
we
established that facility. And the only other planets capable
of
>supporting life have no life on them."

> "Good. Do you have the published works of a Dr. Soran on file?"

> "Yes, sir. Wasn't he the fanatical El-Aurian who destroyed
star
systems so that he could go to paradise?"
>
 "Correct, Captain. He came up with a design for a torpedo
carrying
>trilithium. This torpedo can destroy a star, causing a shock wave
that
will vaporize the entire star system."
>
 "I see where you are going with this. It seems to be our only

>choice at this point. It looks like the Borg were attempting to
salvage
their ship. We need to destroy it before they do that.
I'll get my people
>on it right away."

> "Good luck, Captain." The screen went blank.

>

> V
 Obliteration
>

> "Ready to fire trilithium torpedo, sir."

> "All right, Lieutenant. Load it into the aft launcher and move
us
a safe distance away so that we can escape on impulse."
>
 "Aye sir. Ready to fire, sir."
>
 "Fire and engage impulse drive at maximum on a heading for
Starbase
>235. Resume our previous course."

> "Yes, captain." The torpedo streaked away from the escaping
ships
at lightspeed and hit the Marnis sun. The sky went dark over
the Borg
>crash site as th remaining drones attempted to interpret the data
that
their visual scanners were showing them, and seconds later
the entire star
>system was reduced to rubble and cinders by the shock wave.

> "Captain, subspace shock wave incoming! ETA to impact fifteen
seconds!"

> "All hands, brace for impact!" The shock wave, even now
dampened
by its travel through space, still hit the ships with
more force than that
>of the exploding warp core. The power umbilicals ruptured and
Intrepid was
sent hurtling off into space. With her sensors
offline, damaged by the
>force of the shock wave, Righteous had no choice but to continue on
to the
starbase.
>
 Captain Andropov aboard the Intrepid was just coming around
again.
>The last thing he had seen before passing out were crewmen and
ensigns
running about the bridge with inertial dampers on the ship
offline. He
>looked and saw his first officer trying to regain control of the
700-meter
long, battered and crippled Galaxy-class starship they
were in, knowing
>that if they couldn't get power, even just life support, back
online, the
Intrepid would become the final resting place of

nearly a thousand people,
>himself included. In almost pitch darkness, he groped for the
supply
locker, containing emergency and away team gear from
phasers to food. Once
>he found it, he instructed everyone in range of his comm badge to
put on an
oxygen mask and stay put. Moving around expends too much
of the precious
>gas, and in these kinds of situations, that is not advisable. His
first
officer pushed a dead crewman, crushed by being thrown
around when the ship
>was hit, off of a computer console. To his and Andropov's surprise,
it
still flickered with light. Immediately the two set to work
trying to
>transmit a distress signal and attempting to get life support
online. They
got the signal sent, but the console flickered once
again and went dark
>before they could complete work on systems repair. Discouraged,
Andropov
staggered back to his command chair and blacked out
again.
>
 Meanwhile, the Righteous had safely docked alongside Enterprise
and
>Venture at Starbase 235. Captain Murphy immediately went to
Admiral
Brand's office, where Captain Picard of the Enterprise and
Captain Rogers
>of the Venture. "Sir, we lost Intrepid while transiting from Marnis.
She
was torn away when the shock wave hit. We believe she-
>
 "Admiral Brand, there is a distress signal from Intrepid, audio
only."
>
 "Put it through, Commander." What the four officers heard was a

>static-filled, garbled distress call.

> "SOS...SO.....This is the Fed.....arship Intrepid. We have
been
badly dam.....equest assis.....iately. Please
hurr.....Our
>positZZT"

> "The message has been lost, sir. I think I have a fix on
their
position, though."
>
 "Get Enterprise,Venture, and Righteous underway. We need to
rescue
>those survivors right away." Within five minutes, the three
starships were
on their way, racing to Intrepid's suspected
position.
>
 What they saw was horrific. The entire starship was in an
asteroid
>field, surrounded by a huge cloud of gases and plasma emanating from
its
own hull, and it was slowly drifting. All the lights were
dark.
>
 "We've got to get the crew out of there now. The whole ship's

>going to blow," Captain Rogers exclaimed.

> "How? We can't beam through an asteroid field."

> "Sir, sensors show that the Intrepid's main fusion reactors
and
power generators will reach critical in less than an hour!"

>
 "Murphy to Enterprise and Venture. Start beaming over as many

>people as you can as fast as you can."

> The reply came almost instantly. "Aye sir. We're using
all
available pads and beaming casualties to sickbay."
>
 About half an hour later, the transporter chiefs reported in

again.

>"Sir, we have just about finished the evacuation. All that's left is the
captain. We still don't have a lock on him."

>
 "Keep trying, Commander." The captains looked back to the

>viewscreen just in time to see a horrific sight. The Intrepid's main
reactors exploded in a flash of light, and what was left of the ship's main

>support strut was totally demolished. The two halves of the once-proud
Galaxy-class starship tumbled away from each other, and both sections

>crashed into many of the surrounding asteroids, pulverizing the last
remnants of the ship.

>
 "My God. He was still in there," Murphy whispered in disbelief.

>
 Only Picard stayed cool and calm. "Let's get out of here before we

>get hit as well." The three ships slowly pulled away from the asteroids
and pieces of glowing wreckage and warped out. Several hours later, so did

>a small type-8 probe.

>

> VI
 Reunion

>

> Several hours after the three ships returned to the starbase,
Admiral Brand began to write his report on what had happened in the past

>days. He was just finishing the first paragraph when he was interrupted by
a call.

>
 "Sir, we have picked up a signal. It's very faint, but it's

>definitely Federation. We think it's probe of some sort."

> "Well, tow it in and examine it. I'll be right there." Brand laid
down his padd and left for the shuttlebay.

>
 What they found was a work of ingenuity and last-minute planning.

>When they opened the probe, they found a rigged distress beacon. The real
joy came when they opened the main compartment. Inside they found Captain

>Andropov in stasis. He was rushed to sickbay and revived.

> "You didn't think a starship blowing up could snuff me out, did
you, Jeff? Even the Borg tried three times to do that and failed!"

>
 "It's good to have you back, Nikolai."

>
 That evening over dinner, the officers of the starbase and the

>starships docked there watched the news reports from Earth. One of the
breaking stories was that of the Intrepid. The reporter, a Vulcan named

>T'Palik (Vulcans usually made good reporters because they had no emotions)
began speaking. "Starfleet has just completed a major operation in Alpha

>Quadrant today, as a task force consisting of the Galaxy-class starship
Intrepid and the Excelsior-class starship Righteous repelled an attack by

>an as-yet unknown alien civilization. The only comments commanding
officer Admiral Jeffrey Brand had were that the civilization encountered

>had been recorded by Starfleet earlier, but never deemed hostile until now.
During the battle, the Intrepid was crippled by the

aliens' weapons and
>reduced to impulse power only. An umbilical was erected between the
two
ships to supply enough power for Intrepid to transit back
home. However,
>the unusual and completely unexplained explosion of the Marnis star
just as
they passed broke the bond and sent Intrepid into the
asteroid field formed
>by the remains of the Marnis system. All planets in the system
were
annihilated by the blast. A rescue operation was immediately
launched by
>the starships Righteous, Venture, and Enterprise, rescuing all hands
but
not the ship. It exploded as a massive asteroid ploughed into
its side."
>
 As is standard Starfleet procedure, Captain Andropov was

>court-martialed for the loss of Intrepid. He was not convicted of
any
criminal charges by the Federation Council. Instead the
Council voted
>unanimously to award him the Federation Medal of Honor with Clusters
for
risking his life so that the lives of all 1,018 crew on the
Intrepid could
>be saved. Andropov was also promoted to Commodore and awarded
command of a
new Improved Sovereign-class vessel, the USS
Intrepid, originally christened the
>Olympic in honor of a great Earth sailing ship.

> Andropov was hounded by reporters and officers as he boarded
his
shining new command for its maiden voyage to his new home and
Intrepid's
>permanent base, Starbase 9. A crowd of thousands watched the gallant
ship
and her crew ignite the massive tetrayon plasma engines and
warp off into
>the unknown.

>
 The End

End
file.